

# The Hidden Influence and Catalysts of Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian Basic Schools: Co-Curricular Activities in Perspective



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the hidden influences and catalysts of Religious and Moral Education (RME) within co-curricular activities in Ghanaian basic schools. The importance of RME in Ghana's educational system is undeniable, yet the issues of immoral behaviour among students persist, raising concerns about the efficacy of current educational methods. While formal classroom instruction is crucial, the impact of co-curricular activities on moral and religious development is less understood. This study uses a descriptive survey design to explore the practical factors that influence RME through co-curricular activities. Data were collected from 104 participants, including parents, teachers, and students from the Sefwi Wiawso Municipality. Findings indicate that co-curricular activities, such as community service, sports, debates, and cultural events, are essential for moral and religious growth. The study highlights the benefits of co-curricular activities, including the development of empathy, tolerance, leadership skills, and ethical decision-making. Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate logistic support, and stakeholder disinterest hinder effective implementation. Parents feel excluded and desire more involvement and communication from schools. Teachers emphasize the value of these activities for reinforcing social and cultural values. The study concludes that integrating co-curricular activities into the curriculum is essential for fostering moral and religious development. These insights aim to guide policymakers and educators in improving RME programmes in Ghanaian basic schools, holistic growth of students. This study contributes to scholarship by highlighting the significant role of co-curricular activities in moral and religious education and suggesting practical improvements for educational policy and practice.

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## Publication History

Received:  
6<sup>th</sup> May, 2024  
Accepted:  
11<sup>th</sup> December, 2024  
Published online:  
30<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

**Keywords:** *Co-curricular, Ghanaian Basic Schools, Religious and Moral Education, Holistic Growth, Students, Moral and Ethical Values*

## INTRODUCTION

In the vibrant landscape of Ghanaian basic schools, the intersection of religious and moral education is a cornerstone of the educational journey. Embedded within this framework are various influences and catalysts, often hidden from plain sight, but shaping students' moral and spiritual development. This suggests that religious and moral education stands as a cornerstone in shaping young minds' ethical and spiritual dimensions in a dynamic landscape of educational paradigms like Ghana. Nowhere is this

significance more pronounced than in Ghanaian basic schools, where the interplay of cultural heritage, societal norms, and educational policies intertwines to craft a unique tapestry of moral and religious upbringing. As a result, religious and moral education forms foundational pillars within the Ghanaian educational framework, with the objective of imparting knowledge of religious doctrines and moral values and cultivating ethical reasoning and character development among learners. However, while formal classroom instruction undoubtedly holds sway over these domains, the impact of co-curricular activities, often regarded as ancillary to the core curriculum, warrants closer examination.

Even though Religious and Moral Education (RME) is paramount in the Ghanaian educational system, reflecting the nation's rich cultural heritage and diverse religious traditions, immoral behaviour has become the order of the day among students.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon has raised questions and criticisms about the role and effectiveness of Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian basic schools. Ghanaians believe that the RME programme is rooted in the principles of moral virtue and spiritual growth.<sup>2</sup> According to Martin Owusu, this aspect of education extends far beyond the confines of the classroom, permeating every aspect of student life.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that while the formal curriculum provides a structured foundation, the informal domain of co-curricular activities presents a unique opportunity for the subtle transmission of religious and moral values.

Norah Shultz posits that co-curricular activities encompass a diverse array of extra-curricular pursuits, including but not limited to sports, clubs, community service, and cultural events.<sup>4</sup> Within the context of religious and moral education, these activities serve as fertile ground for the application and reinforcement of ethical principles, as well as for the exploration and expression of religious identity. Despite their potential significance, the role of co-curricular activities in shaping religious and moral education is relatively underutilized in Ghanaian basic schools. Martin Owusu established that despite being informal, these activities have a significant impact on students' holistic development, moulding their character, values, and sense of identity.<sup>5</sup> However, some educational stakeholders perceive that the precise ways in which co-curricular activities intersect with religious and moral education remain relatively unexplored within Ghanaian schools, hindering the cultivation of values and virtues. It is perceived that while the formal curriculum often receives significant attention, the impact of co-curricular activities on Religious and Moral Education remains relatively under-implemented and acknowledged by educational authorities, which plays a role in immoral behaviours among learners. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the hidden influences and catalysts of religious and moral education in the context of co-curricular activities in basic schools in Ghana. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the extent to which co-curricular activities such as extracurricular clubs, community service initiatives, and cultural events contribute to the religious and moral education of students in basic schools in Ghana.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Religious and Moral Education: Definition and Characteristics

Religious and Moral Education encompasses a multifaceted approach to learning, integrating religious teachings, moral principles, and philosophical reflections into the educational curriculum. It involves exploring the beliefs, practices, and ethical frameworks of various religions, as well as promoting critical thinking and ethical decision-making. In many educational contexts, RME seeks to nurture students' spiritual development while fostering respect for different faith traditions and moral perspectives.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that RME plays a significant role in shaping individuals' understanding of ethical values, cultural diversity, and spiritual beliefs. It encompasses a range of educational practices aimed at fostering moral

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Addai-Mensah, "The Role of Akan Values on Moral Upbringing of Children in Contemporary Society," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology* 2 (2020): 96–101.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Yalley, "'STEM Education without Moral Values Breeds Intelligent Criminals'; Opuni-Frimpong," <https://www.myjoyonline.com>, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Owusu, "Promoting Moral Education Among Senior High Students Through Co-Curricular Activities: Are There Challenges In Senior High Schools In Sunyani Municipality?," *International Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Studies* 7, no. 2 (2022): 13–20.

<sup>4</sup> Norah P Shultz, *Revising the Curriculum and Co-Curriculum to Engage Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (Routledge, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Owusu, "Promoting Moral Education Among Senior High Students Through Co-Curricular Activities: Are There Challenges In Senior High Schools In Sunyani Municipality?"

<sup>6</sup> Robert Jackson, *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2013), 18.

development and promoting awareness of various religious traditions. This range of educational practices encompasses co-curricular activities.

The hallmark of RME is its emphasis on inclusivity, acknowledging and respecting the diversity of religious beliefs and moral perspectives within society. According to Robert Jackson, RME emphasises inclusivity by exposing students to different faith traditions and ethical systems, RME cultivates tolerance, empathy, and intercultural understanding.<sup>7</sup> It is established that RME encourages critical inquiry and reflection on religious and moral issues, challenging students to question assumptions, analyse ethical dilemmas, and develop reasoned responses. Linda Baker posits that through dialogue and debate, learners engage with complex ethical issues and develop the skills necessary for ethical decision-making.<sup>8</sup>

Effective RME is not confined to a separate subject but is integrated into the curriculum, infusing religious and moral dimensions into various subjects such as history, literature, and social studies. This interdisciplinary approach enables students to recognize the ethical dimensions of diverse subjects and apply moral principles to real-world contexts.<sup>9</sup> David Carr claims that this could be achieved by exposing learners to the ethical implications of social issues such as poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation; RME empowers learners to become active agents of positive change in their communities.<sup>10</sup> Central to RME is the promotion of dialogue and respect among individuals of different religious and cultural backgrounds. Through open-minded inquiry and respectful engagement, students learn to appreciate the richness of religious diversity and develop the skills necessary for constructive interfaith dialogue.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, RME aims to instil core values such as compassion, integrity, justice, and respect for human dignity. Through the examination of the ethical teachings embedded within religious traditions, students are encouraged to apply these values in their daily lives and interactions with others. However, the implementation of RME faces various challenges and controversies. One issue is the tension between religious freedom and secularism in education. In some contexts, debates arise over the appropriate role of religion in public schools and whether RME should be inclusive of all religious and non-religious perspectives.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, there are concerns about the potential for RME to perpetuate bias or inequality. Critics argue that certain religious perspectives may be privileged over others, or that RME curricula may reflect the values of dominant social groups. Addressing these concerns requires careful attention to curriculum design, teacher training, and inclusive pedagogical approaches.<sup>13</sup>

### **Co-curricular Activities and Students' Religious and Moral Development**

Co-curricular activities are extracurricular activities that are related to the academic curriculum of a school. These activities are intended to complement and enrich the academic programme by allowing students to develop values and skills such as cultural values, leadership, communication, teamwork, moral and ethical values, and creativity. Activities are organized and planned in the school to enhance and enrich students' learning experiences and provide them with additional skills, values, and knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Sports, music, theatre, debate, science clubs, and community service initiatives are examples of co-curricular activities. These activities are organized by school or student-led organizations with school backing. These activities are designed to encourage students' physical fitness, social skills, leadership, cultural knowledge, and civic duty. Participation in extra-curricular activities has been linked

<sup>7</sup> Robert Jackson, "Religious Education and Religious Diversity: Learning for Religious Literacy," *Religious Education* 114, no. 5 (2019): 441–53.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Baker, "Religious Education, Moral Education, and Critical Thinking: A Typology of Pedagogical Approaches," *Journal of Religious Education* 68, no. 2 (2020): 127–41.

<sup>9</sup> Jean McNiff, "Values and Virtues in Higher Education Research: Critical Perspectives," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 40, no. 4 (2018): 430–44.

<sup>10</sup> David Carr, "Education, Ethics and Experience: Essays in Honour of Richard Pring," *Ethics and Education* 12, no. 2 (2017): 219–21.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Wright, "Intercultural and Interfaith Education: Facing the New World Order," *Religious Education* 115, no.3(2020): 220–31.

<sup>12</sup> Meryl De Souza and Gloria Durka, *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education* (Springer, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> James Conroy and Leslie J. Francis, *Critical Approaches to Teaching Religious and Moral Education* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> N. Silsila et al., "Role of Co-Curricular Activities in the Overall Personality Development of Students," *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature* 8, no. 5 (2020): 166–72.

to higher academic accomplishment, self-esteem, and psychological and total well-being.<sup>15</sup> As a result, schools in Ghana are urged to offer a diverse choice of co-curricular activities to assist children in developing holistically. Scholars like Gyamfi, Tuffour and Osei-Tutu, postulate that co-curricular activities in Ghanaian schools that are aimed at promoting the holistic development of students include sports, clubs and societies; cultural groups; community service programmes; leadership training programmes; entrepreneurship programmes.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Role of Sports in Students' Moral Development in School**

Gyamfi and Tuffour established in their study that sports are an integral part of a student's life in school, not only for physical fitness but also for their holistic or overall development. One of the significant benefits of sports is their positive impact on students' moral development.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this is why Stewart Vella *et al.* elaborate that sport is a cultural field of activity in which people freely enter into interactions with other individuals to demonstrate their skills, abilities, competencies, proficiency, and talents in the craft of action and movements according to internalizing established or adopted rules and regulations that are based on socially accepted norms, practices, and ethical values.<sup>18</sup> Sport such as netball or basketball, football, hockey, volleyball, and athletics, is commonly understood as competitive athletic activities, which all happen within the school setting.

According to Shields and Bredemeier, playing sports can serve as a moral laboratory where students can learn about and put their ethical judgment to the test.<sup>19</sup> Sporting provides a platform for students to learn and practice moral principles such as fair play, teamwork, and respect for others. Similarly, Visek *et al.* contend that participation in sports can promote moral growth and social-emotional learning.<sup>20</sup> They also argue that participation in sports can help young people acquire virtues such as self-control, tenacity, and responsibility.<sup>21</sup> These skills can be transferred to other areas of a student's life, such as academic achievement and social interactions. This suggests that sports provide a platform for students to learn about fair play, respect for opponents and officials, and sportsmanship. Sports can also promote empathy and compassion in students. Participation in sports teaches ethical behaviour, including sportsmanship, fair play, self-discipline, responsible behaviour, a sense of accomplishment, and respect for opponents and officials.<sup>22</sup> These qualities are essential in promoting students' moral development as they help in developing students' self-control, accountability, teamwork and cooperation, perseverance, equitable play, respect, self-discipline and a sense of achievement.

### **The Role of Clubs and Societies in Students' Moral Development in School**

According to Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku, clubs and societies are non-formal organizations that allow learners to engage in activities that do not form part of the formal curriculum. They also explain that clubs and societies are usually formed based on common interests or goals and provide a platform for students to interact with their peers and develop social skills.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Agyemang-Duah and Agyemang-Duah assert that clubs and societies are organized groups within schools that provide an avenue and opportunities for learners to participate in numerous activities outside the formal classroom

<sup>15</sup> S. A. Gyamfi and P. Tuffour, "Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Performance: Evidence from Senior High Schools in Ghana," *International Journal of Educational Research and Development* 7, no. 1 (2018): 14–24.

<sup>16</sup> Gyamfi and Tuffour, "Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Performance: Evidence from Senior High Schools in Ghana"; E. Osei-Tutu, "Co-Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects," *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 9 (2016): 41–48.

<sup>17</sup> Gyamfi and Tuffour, "Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Performance: Evidence from Senior High Schools in Ghana."

<sup>18</sup> Stewart A Vella et al., "Psychological Safety in Sport: A Systematic Review and Concept Analysis," *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 17, no. 1 (2024): 516–39.

<sup>19</sup> D Shields, "Character Development and Physical Activity," *Human Kinetics*, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Amanda J Visek et al., "The Fun Integration Theory: Toward Sustaining Children and Adolescents Sport Participation," *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* 12, no. 3 (2015): 424–33.

<sup>21</sup> Visek et al., "The Fun Integration Theory: Toward Sustaining Children and Adolescents Sport Participation."

<sup>22</sup> K. Opoku-Agyemang and V. Atta-Opoku, "An Examination of the Benefits of Extra-Curricular Activities on the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 9 (2015): 88–95.

<sup>23</sup> Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku, "An Examination of the Benefits of Extra-Curricular Activities on the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana," 88.

setting.<sup>24</sup> In addition, they note that clubs and societies may concentrate on academic, social, cultural, or sports-related activities and provide a venue for students to pursue their passions and develop skills outside of the formal curriculum.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that clubs and societies are any social clubs or societies that have received formal approval from school officials and recognition from the student structures. They are under the supervision and protection of the school leadership and the student representative council. Clubs and societies give students the opportunity to meet new people, put their ideas to the test, improve their organizational and communication skills, take on greater responsibility, and expand their perspectives beyond the classroom.

Within the context of cocurricular activities, schools may offer various clubs and societies, including drama clubs, debate clubs, science clubs, music clubs, and art clubs. Osei-Tutu suggests that participation in clubs and societies can enhance students' creativity, critical thinking, ethical values, and problem-solving skills.<sup>26</sup> Clubs and societies, according to Smith and Hargreaves, offer students a forum to explore their interests and develop their values and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that through clubs and societies, students learn to obey the rules and regulations of the club to avoid sanctions and punishment. These co-curricular activities help learners to have an encounter with the norms and expectations of their community since most of the activities, especially drama, music, dance, and other arts, are designed to conform to the cultural norms of the society, thereby helping them to develop the principles, standards, values, and social norms of the community, which guide students in formulating individual principles and values.

Eom and Kim discovered that students who participated in social justice groups and societies had more positive relationships.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, a study by Yang and Chen found that participation in clubs and societies was positively related to the development of moral identity. The study found that students who participated in clubs and societies were more likely to develop a sense of moral identity and engage in prosocial behaviours.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, schools should encourage students to participate in clubs and societies as part of their co-curricular activities. Arnold and Gaddy established that participation in clubs and societies can enhance students' sense of empathy, social responsibility, and civic engagement.<sup>30</sup> Lapsley and Narvaez add that participation in clubs and societies can facilitate moral growth by providing opportunities for moral dialogue, exposure to diverse perspectives, and the development of moral identity.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, participation in co-curricular activities that provide opportunities for moral dialogue, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility may contribute to an increase in moral reasoning skills. Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku also highlight the role of clubs and societies in developing moral values such as teamwork, leadership, and respect for others. They argue that clubs and societies provide students with opportunities to work collaboratively towards a common goal, which helps to develop teamwork and leadership skills. Additionally, clubs and societies provide a platform for students to interact with peers from different backgrounds, which helps to develop respect for diversity.<sup>32</sup> Hence, clubs and societies, provide opportunities for students to interact with their peers and develop positive relationships that contribute to their social and emotional development. Therefore, in Ghana, clubs and societies are prevalent in schools, and play a significant role in shaping students' moral values and attitudes.

<sup>24</sup> I. Agyemang-Duah and W. Agyemang-Duah, "The Role of Co-Curricular Activities in the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana," *Journal of Education and Human Development* 8, no. 2 (2019): 22–33.

<sup>25</sup> Agyemang-Duah and Agyemang-Duah, "The Role of Co-Curricular Activities in the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana."

<sup>26</sup> Osei-Tutu, "Co-Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects," 43.

<sup>27</sup> K. Smith and E. Hargreaves, "Participating in Clubs and Societies: The Relationship with Student Identity and Commitment," *Educational Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 597–606.

<sup>28</sup> M. Eom and H. J. Kim, "Extracurricular Activities, Moral Reasoning, and Values," *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 46, no. 6 (2018): 949.

<sup>29</sup> K. Y. Yang and L. H. Chen, "The Role of Moral Identity in Extracurricular Activities on Students' Moral Competence," *Education and Science* 44, no. 198 (2020): 55–71.

<sup>30</sup> K. D. Arnold and C. Gaddy, "Developing Ethical Leaders through Extracurricular Activities," *Journal of Leadership Education* 17, no. 1 (2018): 73–86.

<sup>31</sup> D. K. Lapsley and D. Narvaez, *Moral Development, Self, and Identity* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku, "An Examination of the Benefits of Extra-Curricular Activities on the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana," 91.

## **The Role of Cultural Groups in Students' Moral Development in School**

Cultural groups have been identified as beneficial co-curricular activities in schools that can help children develop morally. Cultural groups are student-led initiatives in schools that commemorate, promote, embrace, showcase, highlight, celebrate and encourage cultural variety, values, and awareness. These groups are frequently founded based on cultural backgrounds or shared interests, and they organize events and activities that highlight the cultural heritage of their members. Cultural groups provide a forum for students to learn about diverse cultures and traditions and promote mutual respect, tolerance, and cohesion among students from various backgrounds.<sup>33</sup> The groups foster respect and understanding among students from different backgrounds by giving them a space to discover and enjoy one another's traditions. This suggests that students with shared cultural experiences or interests form cultural groups at school and regularly participate in public demonstrations of cultural pride, such as celebrations. The groups create an avenue for students of different backgrounds to come together, learn about, and enjoy their shared cultural heritage.

Liu and Matthews argue that participation in cultural groups can help students cultivate morally important traits such as empathy, understanding, and respect for diversity while also giving them practice in leadership and teamwork.<sup>34</sup> Students' sense of identity, belonging, and purpose can be fostered through participation in cultural groups, which can advance their moral development. Cultural groups can foster a sense of community and belonging, both of which are essential for the healthy holistic development of children. These groups can promote students' moral development by creating opportunities for them to engage in community service and social justice activism, leading to a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement. Camicia and Wang argue that participating in cultural groups is an effective way to instill in students a desire to make a positive difference in their communities.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, joining a cultural group is an effective way for students to cultivate a conscience and a desire to make a positive impact on the world. Cultural groups allow students to have a genuine dialogue on moral concerns that are relevant to their heritage. For instance, Amato, Denny, and Silva discovered that cultural groups provided a forum for students to express their opinions and reflect on moral issues like prejudice, social justice, equality, egalitarianism, and equitable behaviour.<sup>36</sup> These kinds of dialogues can help students develop moral reasoning skills, which are necessary for moral development. This indicates that cultural groups are significant to pupils' moral growth at school. Students can use cultural groups to explore their cultural identity, respect diversity, have meaningful dialogues about moral concerns, and build a sense of social responsibility. Bandura posits that individuals learn by observing others and that social interaction plays a significant role in their cognitive and moral development.<sup>37</sup> Cultural groups provide an avenue for social interaction and expose students to diverse cultural practices and beliefs, which can positively influence their moral development. Therefore, cultural groups promote healthy values and attitudes among students, including reverence for elders, tolerance of diversity, understanding of cultural heritage and valuing the traditions and customs of others and communal living.

## **The Role of Entrepreneurship, Community Service, and Leadership Training Programmes in Students' Moral Development in School**

Co-curricular activities, including entrepreneurship, community service, and leadership training programmes, have gained significant attention as potential contributors to the moral development of students in schools. Although some researchers feel that these activities improve students' moral reasoning, ethical dilemmas, and behaviours, others argue that the relationship is more complex. Regardless, entrepreneurship, community service, and leadership training programmes are among the

<sup>33</sup> C. B. Agyemang and A. Owusu-Ansah, "Cultural Diversity and Educational Attainment: A Ghanaian Perspective," in *Handbook of Research on Education and Technology in a Changing Society*, ed. M. A. Abdulai (IGI Global, 2015), 63.

<sup>34</sup> O. L. Liu and L. Matthews, "A Review of Research on Cultural Diversity in Cultural Organizations," *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Societ* 48, no. 3 (2018): 155–66.

<sup>35</sup> S. P. Camicia and L. Wang, "Cultural Identity Development and Youth Civic Engagement: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 47, no. 11 (2018): 2207–22.

<sup>36</sup> N. Amato, G. S. Denny, and T. Silva, "Ethnic Student Organizations and Moral Identity: A Case Study of a University in the US," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19, no. 4 (2016): 897–991.

<sup>37</sup> Albert Bandura and Richard H Walters, *Social Learning Theory*, vol. 1 (Prentice hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1977), 3.

prominent co-curricular activities that schools provide for their students. They provide students with opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, leadership qualities, and ethical values.

Entrepreneurship education allows students to build ethical decision-making abilities while learning to navigate complex commercial scenarios.<sup>38</sup> It has been discovered that entrepreneurial education favourably benefited students' moral growth by encouraging values such as accountability, social concern, and ethical decision-making.<sup>39</sup> This means that entrepreneurial education can help students' moral growth by promoting ethical decision-making abilities and a sense of social responsibility. It encourages students of all socioeconomic levels to think outside the box and cultivate unusual abilities and skills. It creates opportunity, ensures social justice, instils trust, and boosts the economy.

According to Eric Riedel, "community service" is labour performed for the benefit of others by an individual or group.<sup>40</sup> It is often done near where the organization or individual resides so that the community can benefit from their efforts. Heinz Reinders and James Youniss add Community service is the participation of a group or individual in a planned activity that benefits local, societal, or global society.<sup>41</sup> It is sometimes referred to as "volunteering," which is the act of someone working on behalf of another person or a cause without receiving compensation for their time and services. Therefore, community-based programmes are unaffiliated social activities, functions, opportunities, and services that aid in the social and economic integration of people with developmental or physical limitations. Compassion, appreciation, a sense of social responsibility, a dedication to social justice, and humility can all be developed through community service. These initiatives allow students to participate in activities that benefit and serve their communities. The programmes might take different forms, such as volunteering at a local organization or participating in service-learning projects that benefit pupils' social, moral, and ethical development. Participation in community service is associated with students' moral reasoning, values, and behaviours.<sup>42</sup> In addition, participating in volunteer work can help young people build social awareness, compassion, and responsibility. Students can develop empathy and the ability to respond to the needs of others by participating in community service.

Another extracurricular activity associated with moral development is leadership training. Leadership development programmes seek to cultivate students' leadership skills and competencies so that they may become efficient and effective leaders. Leadership training programmes can be defined as structured, organized, and creative experiences and workshops designed to support students in enhancing and developing their leadership capabilities. Leadership development initiatives are short-term courses designed to equip participants with fundamental management skills and improve their leadership potential at work.<sup>43</sup> These initiatives can be presented in a variety of ways, such as workshops, seminars, and leadership camps. They are intended to support students in developing their leadership competencies, such as decision-making, communication, and problem-solving. Students' moral and ethical ideals can be developed through these programmes. Leadership training programmes can teach students the importance of integrity, responsibility, and ethical decision-making.<sup>44</sup> The programme can help students develop a sense of social responsibility and empathy, which are essential in the moral development of students. Côté and Levine claim that as students learn to incorporate moral concepts and values into their decision-making and behaviours, leadership development can be viewed as a process of moral

<sup>38</sup> R. S. Shinnar, D. K. Hsu, and B. C. Powell, "Entrepreneurship Education: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17, no. 4 (2015): 372-396.

<sup>39</sup> I. Hatak et al., "Entrepreneurship Education and Moral Development: The Role of Values, Identity, and Learning Processes," *Journal of Business Venturing* 35, no. 4 (2020): 1-1.

<sup>40</sup> Eric Riedel, "The Impact of High School Community Service Programs on Students' Feelings of Civic Obligation," *American Politics Research* 30, no. 5 (2002): 499.

<sup>41</sup> Heinz Reinders and James Youniss, "School-Based Required Community Service and Civic Development in Adolescents," *Applied Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (2006): 2-12.

<sup>42</sup> E. T. Pascarella and P. T. Terenzini, *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*, vol. 2 (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> John P Dugan, "Research on College Student Leadership Development," *The Handbook for Student Leadership Development* 2 (2011): 59.

<sup>44</sup> Jessica E Dinh et al., "Leadership Theory and Research in the New Millennium: Current Theoretical Trends and Changing Perspectives," *The Leadership Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2014): 36-62.

maturation.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, leadership training programmes can help students develop self-awareness, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility, all of which are important for moral development.

Entrepreneurship, community service, and leadership training programmes as co-curricular activities have all been found to be effective in promoting moral development in students. These programmes provide opportunities for students to develop ethical decision-making skills, a sense of moral identity, a sense of civic responsibility and social justice, promote empathy and concern for others, and foster a sense of responsibility to their community. Schools should consider incorporating these programmes into their co-curricular activities to promote the moral development of their students. They also enhance students' leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for their overall development. Therefore, schools should encourage and provide opportunities for students to participate in these co-curricular activities since they provide opportunities for students to learn ethical principles, values, and behaviours, as well as social and emotional skills and leadership qualities. Schools must incorporate these extracurricular activities into their curriculum to improve students' moral development.

### **The Role of Collective Worship in Schools on Students' Moral Development**

Collective worship in schools is an essential component of the educational curriculum, which requires a regular meeting of students to participate in activities that promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural growth. As a result, in many nations, collective worship has become an essential component of the educational curriculum. It is a time for meditation, spiritual growth, and community building among teachers, learners, and school authorities.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, collective worship has been a longstanding tradition in many schools, intending to provide a space for reflection and personal development. Collective Worship is defined as a "gathering of the school community for a time of reflection and celebration that is inclusive, inspirational, and accessible."<sup>47</sup> Its goal is to give students a place to reflect on their spiritual and moral principles, foster community, and improve their social, emotional, and spiritual states. Although it has historically been connected to religious practices, recent research has looked into its potential to support students' moral development regardless of their religious background.

Educators and academics have debated the significance of collective worship in schools. While some argue that collective worship as an extracurricular activity fosters moral development in students, others argue that it threatens religious freedom. Despite this, collective worship is frequently viewed as an essential aspect of the school's ethos and a means of fostering the moral development of learners. Collective worship, according to Julian Stern and Rachael Shillitoe, is an important part of the school's culture since it allows pupils to reflect on their beliefs, ideals, and moral principles.<sup>48</sup> Reflective practice allows students to learn from their experiences to build and improve their ethical behaviours, as well as their future endeavours and moral ideals. Collective worship as a form of reflective practice helps students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their own and others' knowledge, understanding, skills, values, competencies, and moral standards, as well as those of the school and the community at large. This may be why Boffey posits that collective worship is a significant part of a student's holistic education since it supplements the academic curriculum by allowing children to develop their moral ideals and convictions.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Imran Mogra contends that group worship allows learners to develop moral values and beliefs that are critical and very significant for their performance and behaviour in school and life.<sup>50</sup>

Palmer believes that collective worship allows students to develop spiritually by exploring and challenging their presumptions and worldviews. As a result, students can think about the effects of their

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<sup>45</sup> J. E. Côté and C. G. Levine, *Identity Formation, Agency, and Culture: A Social Psychological Synthesis* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Rachael Shillitoe, "Rethinking Religion and Non-Religion in Collective Worship," in *Nonreligion in Late Modern Societies: Institutional and Legal Perspectives* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022).

<sup>47</sup> Church of England Education Office, *Collective Worship: Guidance for Schools* (Church House Publishing, 2017), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Julian Stern and Rachael Shillitoe, "Prayer Spaces in Schools: A Subversion of Policy Implementation?," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40, no. 2 (2019): 228.

<sup>49</sup> J. Boffey, "Collective Worship in Schools," *Education Today* 62, no. 3 (2012): 18.

<sup>50</sup> Imran Mogra, "Learning through Observations: The Potential of Collective Worship in Primary Schools," *Pastoral Care in Education* 35, no. 1 (2017): 3–12.

actions on others and grow in their capacity for kindness and compassion. Palmer further asserts that by participating in regular acts of collective worship, students can develop meaningful relationships with their peers and gain a sense of belonging to a larger group or community.<sup>51</sup> Morgan and Otway contend that collective worship can benefit pupils' moral growth. According to them, it can assist pupils in developing a sense of moral responsibility towards themselves and others. It can also enhance social cohesion and foster a sense of appreciation for variety.<sup>52</sup>

However, there are also criticisms of collective worship in schools. According to Mawhinney, it can be difficult for schools to create a daily act of collective worship that reflects all pupils' cultural and religious views. He believes that for some pupils, this might contribute to sentiments of exclusion and marginalization.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Bunting contends that collective worship can be perceived as coercive and may prevent students from exploring their beliefs and values in depth. She argues that this can impede the moral development of students and result in a lack of critical thinking.<sup>54,55</sup> As such, schools must consider the diversity of their student body and ensure that collective worship is inclusive and allows for critical reflection.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The research investigated the practical factors that influence Religious and Moral Education in basic schools in Ghana through co-curricular activities. To explore this, a descriptive survey design was employed. As established by Kothari, descriptive survey studies focus on delineating the characteristics of specific individuals or groups within an organization, institution, or society.<sup>56</sup> Helen Dulock understands the descriptive survey design to collect data that provides insight into or addresses inquiries regarding a current environment, such as a school.<sup>57</sup> The primary objective of a descriptive survey is to provide a comprehensive interpretation of current issues. As a result, it was used to investigate the concealed impact and drivers of religious and moral education in Ghanaian elementary schools through co-curricular activities. This methodology allowed the researchers to collect data and viewpoints from various respondents, systematically capturing information to depict the phenomenon, circumstances, and population under scrutiny.

### Study Area

The Sefwi Wiawso Municipality serves as the focal point for this study. Its diversity and accessibility render it an ideal setting for exploring the interplay between educational institutions and the development of religious and moral values among its youth population through co-curricular activities. The survey was restricted to parents, teachers, and students residing in the prominent towns in the municipality, namely Wiawso, Boako, Asafo, and Asawinso.

### Sampling and Data Collection

To ensure equitable participation of schools from these selected towns in the study, a simple random sampling method was employed to choose two schools from each town. Two distinct focus groups, each comprising ten participants, were established in every school: one for students and another for parents. The selection of participants was carried out using a combination of simple random sampling and purposive sampling for students and parents, respectively. The student focus group consisted entirely of Form 3 Junior High School (JHS) students. This decision was based on the understanding that students in middle adolescence (aged 14 to 17) are more inclined to express their thoughts freely and have had

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<sup>51</sup> P. Palmer, "The Role of Collective Worship in Spiritual Development," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 36, no. 3 (2015): 350.

<sup>52</sup> K. Morgan and J. Otway, "Collective Worship in Schools and Its Contribution to Spiritual and Moral Development: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Religious Education* 64, no. 1 (2016): 60.

<sup>53</sup> H. Mawhinney, "The Role of Collective Worship in Schools in the UK: A Critical Evaluation," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 1, no. 14 (2016): 37–1.

<sup>54</sup> M. Bunting, "Collective Worship in Schools: A Critical Analysis," *British Journal of Religious Education*, 37(1), (2015): 69.

<sup>55</sup> M. Bunting, "Collective Worship in Schools: A Critical Analysis," *British Journal of Religious Education* 37, no. 1 (2015): 59–71.

<sup>56</sup> C. R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. (2nd Ed.), (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 28.

<sup>57</sup> Helen Dulock, "Research design: Descriptive research," *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing* 10, no. 4 (1993): 154-157.

sufficient exposure to various school activities. Similarly, four (4) headmasters and 20 members of teaching staff were purposefully selected. A total of 104 individuals participated in the study, comprising 40 students, 40 parents, 20 teaching staff, and four (4) head teachers. Data from the teaching staff and head teachers were collected through semi-structured interviews.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this study, ethical considerations were carefully addressed to ensure the protection of all participants' rights and well-being. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including students, parents, and teachers. For participants under the age of 18, consent was sought from their parents or guardians. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, their roles, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the research process, and all personal information was anonymised to protect the identities of the participants. The researchers also ensured that the questions and discussions in the focus groups and interviews were respectful and culturally sensitive, avoiding any topics that could cause distress or discomfort. Additionally, the study adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations established by relevant educational and research institutions in Ghana.

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Parents, educators, and students collectively represent indispensable stakeholders in the educational structure, which are integral elements of the school entity. Co-curricular activities play a crucial role in fostering the moral development of students. These extracurricular pursuits provide students with opportunities to explore and reinforce ethical values within the framework of their religious beliefs. Participation in community service, religious clubs, or moral education programmes allow students to apply their religious teachings in practical situations, promoting a deeper understanding of ethical principles and their integration into daily life. Therefore, the school's role in instilling religious and moral values is compromised without co-curricular activities. This makes it significant to consider the perspectives of educational stakeholders regarding the role of co-curricular activities in fostering religious and moral values, as the study focuses on the school's role in imparting religious and moral principles.

Students perceive that co-curricular activities play a significant role in shaping their moral perspectives. According to them, these activities allow them to engage in various social, cultural, and ethical experiences that contribute to their overall character development. They mentioned that co-curricular activities allow them to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This exposure helps them develop empathy, tolerance, and respect for others' perspectives and values. For instance, when they work together on a community service project or participate in a debate club or sport, they learn the importance of cooperation and understanding different viewpoints. They added that co-curricular activities often involve leadership roles and responsibilities that require ethical decision-making. Students are given opportunities to take charge of clubs or organisations where they must make decisions that align with their moral compasses. This participation fosters critical thinking skills, as well as the ability to make principled choices based on values such as honesty, integrity, and fairness. A male student unequivocally brought up this matter:

*“That's the fun part of school; we meet new people from other towns or places and learn how to get along with them and work together. As my school's football captain, I sometimes have to step up and make decisions that require good behaviour.”*

The findings confirm Mensah, Ofori, and Nyamekye's assertion that participation in clubs, sports, community service, and other extracurricular endeavours allows students to interact with diverse peers, navigate challenges, and develop a sense of responsibility and empathy.<sup>58</sup> Students perceive extracurricular activities as a pleasurable facet of their academic journey, likely attributable to their ability to provide a practical extension to formal learning, presenting a well-rounded approach to the educational experience.

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<sup>58</sup> J. K. Mensah, R. Ofori, and M. Nyamekye, “The Effect of Participation in Sporting Activities on the Moral Development of Students in Basic Schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 10, no. 18 (2019): 8–15.

Students believe that certain extracurricular activities play a crucial role in instilling moral values. These activities include school worship, sports and games, debates, participation in community gatherings or community service, and charity work. According to their perspective, school worship sessions offer a platform for contemplating ethical principles, nurturing a connection to spirituality, and fostering a sense of moral responsibility. In contrast, participation in sports and games contributes to the cultivation of qualities like teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship, all of which are essential components of moral character. They also highlighted that engaging in debates not only improves communication skills but also encourages discussions on moral dilemmas, promoting critical thinking and ethical reasoning. Similarly, participating in community gatherings or activities exposes students to diverse viewpoints and social issues, cultivating empathy and a sense of civic duty. An illustrative comment from a student sums up their argument:

*“I think extracurricular activities like worship, sports and games, debates, community service, and charity work are good ways to teach morals.”*

According to the findings among the various extracurricular activities available, school worship, sports and games, debates, participation in community gatherings or community service, and charity work are particularly effective in instilling moral values in students. The results corroborate Morgan and Otway's assertion that through school worship, regular prayer sessions, or participation in religious ceremonies, students acquire knowledge and values of compassion, forgiveness, humility, and gratitude.<sup>59</sup> The results further confirm Gyamfi and Tuffour's assertion that sports and games, debates, and community service play a crucial role in teaching students about teamwork, charity, discipline, perseverance, and fair play.<sup>60</sup>

The students expressed concern about the limited emphasis on co-curricular activities, attributing it to the densely packed academic calendar. They observed a predominant focus among teachers on swiftly covering the syllabus, leading to a perceived lack of interest and commitment towards co-curricular endeavours. Additionally, the students highlighted the insufficient logistical support for co-curricular activities on campuses and a dearth of community involvement. On this matter, a student made this statement:

*“Basically, right now, co-curricular activities aren't getting much attention. Teachers blame the busy academic schedule, insufficient time on the school timetable, and a lack of community support. And guess what? We don't even have the necessary resources.”*

The findings depict the student's desire for a more balanced and supportive educational environment that recognises and nurtures the holistic growth of individuals through a blend of academic and co-curricular pursuits. One major issue highlighted by students is the lack of logistics for co-curricular activities on campuses. Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku observed in their studies that without adequate facilities, it becomes difficult to engage students in various extracurricular pursuits like sports, arts, or clubs.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the absence of community support could stem from an inadequate relationship between schools and their respective communities.

Parents perceive that engagement in co-curricular activities offers a rich avenue for their children to acquire various moral lessons. Through participation in such activities, students are seen to develop virtues like self-discipline as they learn to manage their time and commitments effectively. It was emphasised that the experience also fosters truthfulness, as students navigate challenges with honesty and integrity. Co-curricular involvement is seen as a catalyst for building self-confidence, enabling students to explore their abilities and strengths in a supportive environment. According to parents, exposure to diverse perspectives and interactions in these activities nurtures tolerance, promoting a sense of empathy and understanding. Ultimately, parents see co-curricular engagement as a means for their children to carve out their identity within the broader community, instilling a sense of purpose and belonging. A parent set forth the statement below:

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<sup>59</sup> Morgan and Otway, “Collective Worship in Schools and Its Contribution to Spiritual and Moral Development: A Review of the Literature,” 60.

<sup>60</sup> Gyamfi and Tuffour, “Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Performance: Evidence from Senior High Schools in Ghana,” 16.

<sup>61</sup> Opoku-Agyemang and Atta-Opoku, “An Examination of the Benefits of Extra-Curricular Activities on the Moral Development of Senior High School Students in Ghana,” 88.

*“As a professional teacher, I know co-curricular activities provide an excellent platform for our children to acquire valuable moral lessons such as self-discipline, truthfulness, self-confidence, tolerance, and establishing their identity within the community.”*

According to the results, parents perceive that co-curricular activities instil self-discipline in students. This validates the conclusions drawn by Lartey and Boadu, who assert that in participation in sports or performing arts, students learn the importance of following rules and regulations, being punctual, and managing their time effectively.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Baidoo and Frimpong established in their study that students learn to value honesty and integrity by acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses in team-based activities like sports, debates or group projects, which enables them to face challenges with resilience.<sup>63</sup>

Parents emphasised the significance of co-curricular activities, particularly those with religious and social dimensions, as potent conduits for instilling moral values in students. Within the social domain, parents identified a spectrum of activities, including sports, debate, quiz competitions, entertainment pursuits, civic education clubs, drama troupes, and festival celebrations. These activities were considered integral to fostering character development and moral principles. Furthermore, within the religious context, parents highlighted the importance of activities such as participation in musical groups, engagement in scripture union activities, involvement in denominational associations, and attendance at worship services. However, parents expressed concern about the inadequate functioning of these co-curricular activities in contemporary basic schools, noting that, except for sporadic sports events and weekly worship sessions held on Wednesdays in Ghanaian basic schools, comprehensive implementation of such activities is lacking. Below is a statement from a parent:

*“I believe that extracurricular activities, especially those related to religion and entail social interaction, are important for teaching moral values. The problem is that it happens once a week.”*

According to the results, various co-curricular activities that are religious and social are effective means of imparting moral values. On the social front, sports, debate, quiz competitions, entertainment clubs, civic education clubs, drama troupes, and others have been mentioned. This confirms Osei-Tutu's findings that these activities promote teamwork, discipline, fair play, and respect for others, all essential components of moral development.<sup>64</sup> On the religious front, musical groups, the Scripture Union, denominational associations, and worship have been highlighted as significant avenues for instilling moral values. The findings underscore the assertion of Rachael Shillitoe that religious activities foster the development of children's spirituality and impart virtues like compassion, forgiveness, and humility.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, the findings suggest that, apart from sports and worship, other activities receive little attention or are overlooked, possibly due to limitations in resources and time.

Parents have expressed apprehension regarding their minimal participation in the school's extracurricular programmes. They contend that, despite regular Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, school authorities consistently withhold information on sports and games, compelling parents to depend on community-based observations for updates on such events. Parents assert that greater inclusion and communication from the school are imperative to facilitate their support and involvement in these extracurricular activities. They propose a more proactive approach from the school to inform and engage parents to foster a collaborative environment that enables meaningful support for students in co-curricular pursuits to help them develop the values that shape their character and moral compass. A parent's comment explains their point:

*“In this community, schools don't include parents in extracurricular activities. We only hear about them and attend to watch, even though we have PTA meetings. The school should keep parents informed and involved.”*

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<sup>62</sup> S. S. Lartey and S. K. Boadu, “The Role of Sports in Promoting Gender Equity: A Study of Selected Senior High Schools,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 5 (2014): 62.

<sup>63</sup> J. Baidoo and M. Frimpong, “The Role of Extracurricular Activities in the Moral Development of Secondary School Students in Ghana: The Case of Sunyani Municipality,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 11, no. 30 (2020): 162.

<sup>64</sup> Osei-Tutu, “Co-Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects.”

<sup>65</sup> Shillitoe, “Rethinking Religion and Non-Religion in Collective Worship,” 93.

The findings expressed apprehension regarding parents' only means of supporting these activities, which are restricted to physically attending and witnessing events. The results substantiate the conclusions drawn by Chandra Muller and Kerbow David, highlighting that insufficient school engagement and a lack of proactive involvement by authorities in integrating the community into the planning and implementation of co-curricular events lead to community isolation from school activities requiring their support.<sup>66</sup>

Teachers claim that co-curricular activities play a role in cultivating students' comprehension and appreciation of the inherent social and cultural values ingrained in Ghanaian societies. Diverse activities, including festivals, cultural displays, music and dance events, sports, school worships, seminars, drama, folktales, chieftaincy installations, and occupation-related endeavours, offer immersive experiences that reinforce the rich tapestry of norms, beliefs, principles, and moral concepts prevalent in Ghanaian culture. The educators contend that these activities serve as conduits for emphasising and comprehending the significance of values such as greetings, hospitality, courtesy, politeness, and social etiquette. Furthermore, these engagements contribute significantly to students' development of communitarian moral values, fostering traits like compassion, solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, interdependence, and a deep sense of community among students. A teacher made an expression that perfectly captured their position:

*"I think co-curricular activities, such as festivals, cultural displays, music and dance, sports, and religious practices, enable students to grasp the fundamental social and cultural values embedded in Ghanaian societies."*

The findings illustrate that co-curricular activities provide a platform for students to witness and participate in various traditions and customs of their society. The finding co-operates with Wiredu's claim that festivals and cultural displays showcase the diversity of Ghanaian culture and allow individuals to appreciate the importance of preserving these traditions.<sup>67</sup> It further affirms Gyekye's position that these activities reinforce social standards and values such as greetings, hospitality, courtesy, politeness, and social etiquette.<sup>68</sup>

On the types of co-curricular activities that effectively promote moral and social development, the teachers perceive that each co-curricular activity has its unique value and teaches distinct lessons to students, emphasising specific aspects of moral and social growth. According to teachers, participating in community service projects instils a sense of empathy and social responsibility, while participating in team sports can teach teamwork, communication, and sportsmanship. Through these diverse activities, teachers believe that students are exposed to a range of values and skills that collectively contribute to their holistic development as responsible and well-rounded individuals. This is a statement from a teacher:

*"Oh, every extracurricular activity is good for moral and social growth. The only difference is that each one teaches students different morals."*

The research findings underscore the significance of co-curricular activities in facilitating the comprehensive development of students beyond the conventional classroom milieu. It is acknowledged that each co-curricular pursuit imparts unique values and teaches distinctive lessons to students. This understanding serves as the foundation for the emphasis on Gyamfi, Tuffour,<sup>69</sup> and Osei-Tutu's<sup>70</sup> place on a wide range of extracurricular activities, positing that they are essential for fostering moral and social growth, and thereby contributing to holistic development. In contrast, Amoah places a focal point on the values cultivated through cultural activities, asserting that endeavours such as music or drama contribute

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<sup>66</sup> Chandra Muller and David Kerbow, "Parent Involvement in the Home, School, and Community," in *Parents, Their Children, and Schools* (Routledge, 2018).

<sup>67</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, "Social Philosophy in Postcolonial Africa: Some Preliminaries Concerning Communalism and Communitarianism," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (2008): 332–39.

<sup>68</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity*, vol. 9 (Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2004), 89.

<sup>69</sup> Gyamfi and Tuffour, "Co-Curricular Activities and Academic Performance: Evidence from Senior High Schools in Ghana," 16.

<sup>70</sup> Osei-Tutu, "Co-Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects," 41–48.

significantly to the development of learners. According to Amoah, cultural activities serve as a catalyst for nurturing creativity, enabling self-expression, fostering mutual respect, cultivating tolerance, promoting cohesion, and engendering empathy among students.<sup>71</sup>

The interdependent relationship between educational institutions and communities is evident in a purposeful collaboration directed towards the alignment of co-curricular activities with ethical principles. Teachers assert their unwavering commitment to this alignment. They actively participate in community engagement initiatives by convening with community elders and dignitaries at the community palace during cultural activity days within the school premises. Simultaneously, reciprocal involvement is witnessed during community festivals, as the palace authorities extend invitations to members of the school community. In the realm of sports activities, this collaborative ethos persists, with teachers actively involving the PTA chairman and other dignitaries on the school board in the planning process. According to teachers, this deliberate engagement fosters a comprehensive integration of community stakeholders in shaping the ethical dimensions of co-curricular pursuits. A teacher made the statement below:

*"We get along well with the community, not just through co-curricular activities. They include us in their celebrations, and we do the same. The PTA chairman and other important people help set up sports and games."*

The findings reveal that the educational institution actively engages with the local community, reciprocated by the community's active participation in school-sponsored festivals. However, a nuanced observation indicates partial neglect of certain parents within the community, as the school's decision-making authority predominantly rests within the purview of community leadership and the individuals overseeing the school board. This suggests that schools neglect Glendinning's advocacy that parents and the community play a crucial role as moral educators; therefore, schools should actively involve them in the moral development of children.<sup>72</sup>

Teachers acknowledged the existence of several difficulties in the development and implementation of co-curricular activities within the school environment. These issues arise from various sources, such as students, administrative staff, and the curriculum framework. The obstacles that have been highlighted include limited financial resources, inadequate supervision, negative attitudes, inadequate logistical support, and the optional nature of participation in co-curricular activities. In addition, the teachers emphasised that the lack of dedication of important individuals involved in the education system, such as authorities, parents, and other influential figures, is a major obstacle to successfully implementing and achieving the desired outcomes of co-curricular activities. The various issues highlighted the intricate nature of managing co-curricular planning and implementation in the field of education. This statement encapsulates their views:

*"We have a wide range of challenges ranging from finance to logistics. Even some teachers, school administrators, parents, and students are not interested in co-curricular activities."*

The results suggest that in today's educational landscape, schools face a myriad of challenges that span from financial constraints to logistical issues. The results confirm Osei-Tutu's finding that a significant barrier often goes unnoticed is the lack of enthusiasm for extracurricular activities among teachers, school administrators, parents, and even students, who view these activities as additional duties rather than opportunities for personal growth.<sup>73</sup> Parents' disinterest in co-curricular activities can stem from a lack of awareness about their benefits or concerns about time commitments and costs associated with participation. In some cases, parents may prioritise academic success over extracurriculars. Similarly, Ignatius Toner established in his studies that student disinterest could be attributed to various

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<sup>71</sup> E. O. Amoah, "The Effects of Extracurricular Activities on Academic Performance: A Study of Selected Senior High Schools in Ghana," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research* 7, no. 3 (2019): 50–62.

<sup>72</sup> Irene Glendinning, "Educational Integrity in Schools: A Framework for Young Learners," in *Ethics and Integrity in Teacher Education* (Cham.: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 161.

<sup>73</sup> Osei-Tutu, "Co-Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects," 47.

factors, such as peer pressure or a lack of motivation due to limited exposure or encouragement from adults around them.<sup>74</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussions outlined these are the recommendations made to enhance the role of co-curricular activities in promoting Religious and Moral Education in Ghanaian basic schools:

- 1. Integrate Co-curricular Activities into the Formal Curriculum:** Schools should recognize the significance of co-curricular activities as vehicles for Moral and Religious Education. Integrate these activities into the formal curriculum to ensure that they receive adequate attention and resources. This could involve scheduling regular time slots for activities such as community service, debates, cultural events, and religious observances.
- 2. Professional Development for Teachers:** The Ghana Education Service should provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively facilitate co-curricular activities that promote moral and religious values. Teachers must understand the value of these activities and be encouraged to actively engage and support students' participation.
- 3. Enhanced Communication and Collaboration with Parents:** School administrators should establish regular channels of communication with parents to keep them informed about co-curricular activities and their significance in moral and religious education. Encourage parental involvement and support by inviting them to participate in planning committees, attending events, and providing feedback on their effectiveness.
- 4. Investment in Resources and Infrastructure:** The Ghana Education Service should allocate adequate financial resources and logistic support for the implementation of co-curricular activities. They should ensure that schools have the facilities, equipment, and materials necessary to facilitate a wide range of activities, including sports, cultural events, and community service projects.
- 5. Community Engagement and Partnership:** School administrators should foster collaboration between schools and the local community to enrich co-curricular activities with cultural and religious significance. Engage community leaders, elders, and organizations in planning and implementing activities that promote moral and religious values, ensuring that they reflect the community's beliefs, traditions, and aspirations.

## CONCLUSION

The results have suggested that in the realm of Ghanaian basic schools, the effective execution of co-curricular activities to impart religious and moral education involves a collaborative effort among various stakeholders. Teachers and head teachers play important roles in designing, organizing, and overseeing these activities, ensuring that they align with educational objectives while integrating religious and moral values. They provide guidance, mentorship, and supervision to students, fostering an environment conducive to moral development. Students are active participants in co-curricular activities, perceiving them as integral to their moral growth. Through community service, religious clubs, and sports, students apply religious teachings and ethical principles in practical settings. These activities cultivate empathy, tolerance, and ethical decision-making skills, shaping students into virtuous individuals.

Similarly, parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's participation in co-curricular activities, recognizing their potential to instil moral values. They advocate for a balanced educational approach that includes religious and social dimensions, urging schools to foster a collaborative environment that engages parents more actively. Community involvement is essential for the success of co-curricular activities, as schools collaborate with local leaders and elders to align activities with cultural values. However, challenges such as limited resources, disinterest of stakeholders, and logistical problems pose obstacles to effective implementation. Despite these challenges, the collective efforts of teachers, headteachers, students, parents, and community members underscore the importance of co-curricular activities in shaping students' moral development. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration,

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<sup>74</sup> Ignatius J. Toner, "Moral Development and Sports Participation," in *Mind-Body Maturity* (Taylor & Francis, 2019), 129.

stakeholders can ensure that co-curricular activities serve as potent tools for imparting religious and moral values in Ghanaian basic schools.

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